

New sex abuse allegations levied against prominent cardinal

AP

SARAH RANKIN

,Associated Press July 20, 2018

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — A Virginia man said Friday he was sexually abused for about two decades by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, a prominent Roman Catholic leader who was removed from public ministry last month over separate child abuse allegations.

The man, who agreed to be identified only by his first name, James, told The Associated Press he recently filed a police report detailing the abuse with the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office. James, who first spoke publicly with The New York Times for a story published Thursday, said the abuse began when he was a child and continued into adulthood.

McCarrick was a close family friend, James said. The 88-year-old retired archbishop of Washington, D.C., is one of the highest-ranking U.S. church officials accused in a sexual abuse scandal that has seen thousands of priests implicated.

"I was the first guy he baptized," James said. "I was his little boy. I was his special kid. I was the kid he always sought out."

McCarrick, who did not immediately respond to an interview request from AP, has denied the abuse allegations that led to his removal last month by Pope Francis. The church announced June 20 that allegations were found to be "credible" that McCarrick fondled an altar boy in New York more than 40 years ago.

In a statement issued at the time of his removal, McCarrick said, "While I have absolutely no recollection of this reported abuse, and believe in my innocence, I am sorry for the pain the person who brought the charges has gone through, as well as for the scandal such charges cause our people."

Asked Friday about James' statements, a longtime friend of McCarrick's who didn't want to be identified because she doesn't officially serve as his spokeswoman said he hadn't received formal notice of any new allegation but would follow the civil and church processes in place to investigate them.

James said he struggled for decades with immense shame and guilt over the abuse, which he said had started by at least age 11 and extended for about two decades into his 30s. He said the abuse included McCarrick exposing himself, forcing him to sleep in the same bed and touching him inappropriately.

He said he struggled with alcoholism, which broke up his marriage, and attempted suicide multiple times. He's been sober since he was 33, he said.

James recounted confronting McCarrick as an adult, telling him he was going to go public with his allegations.

"You can't do that," James says McCarrick told him. "No one's going to believe you. You're a drunk. You're an idiot. ... Do you know how important I am?"

James said he included in his police report the incidents he considers most "disgusting," which he says took place in several different states.

James' attorney, Patrick Noaker, provided AP with a document from the sheriff's office confirming that a police report had been taken. A spokesman for the department declined to release a full copy of the report.

Noaker said he was told the report would be passed on to the jurisdictions where James says the crimes occurred. He said he expects the statute of limitations may have run out in some states but is hopeful that prosecutors in California may be able to pursue charges. That's because statutes of limitation run differently when someone enters a state, commits a crime and then leaves, as James alleges McCarrick did in California, Noaker said.

James said he hoped to see McCarrick prosecuted and would like a public apology. But he also said he hoped his coming forward would make other victims of sex abuse feel less alone.

"I've never felt this good in a long, long time," he said.

The Associated Press does not identify people who say they're victims of sexual assault unless they grant permission. James asked to be identified only by his first name to protect the privacy of family members.

McCarrick served as archbishop of Washington from 2001-2006 and archbishop of Newark, New Jersey, for 15 years before that. As Washington archbishop, McCarrick was a major power broker in Vatican-U.S. relations during the final years of the pontificate of St. John Paul II and the start of Pope Benedict XVI's papacy.

His ties to Washington's political elites proved crucial when Pope Francis tasked him with the delicate behind-the-scenes negotiations that helped lead to the 2014 U.S.-Cuba thaw.

McCarrick was also well-known in Rome, serving on a host of Vatican congregations before he retired, including the Pontifical Council for Latin America. That post would have brought him in contact with Argentine Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the future Pope Francis, who was made a cardinal in the same 2001 consistory as McCarrick.

In 2002, he led a delegation of U.S. churchmen to Rome, at the height of the American sex abuse scandal, and vowed to pursue a "one strike and you're out" policy that later became the U.S. Catholic bishops' norms for fighting abuse.

Chieko Noguchi, a spokeswoman for the Archdiocese of Washington, said in an emailed statement that the archdiocese takes all allegations of abuse seriously and is committed to following its long-standing child protection policy.

She declined to make further comment on James' allegations, "as this claim did not occur in the Archdiocese of Washington."